

THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

OF THE

NEW YORK STATE LIBRARY.

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REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE

MADE TO THE TRUSTEES JANUARY 9, 1879 -

ON THE

REPORT OF THE LIBRARIAN OF THE GENERAL LIBRARY.

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ALBANY :  
CHARLES VAN BENTHUYSEN & SONS.  
1879.

# THE FUTURE OF DEVELOPMENT



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## RECITAL OF RESOLUTION OF TRUSTEES OF JANUARY 11, 1878.

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IN BOARD OF REGENTS, }  
January 11, 1878. }

On motion of Mr. Hale :

*Resolved*, That the report of the Librarian of the General Library, this day submitted to the board, be referred to a select committee of five to be appointed by the Chancellor; that said committee be instructed to consider the questions suggested by said report and such other questions as they may deem important as to the future management, development and character of the library; to obtain, as fully as may be practicable, information as to the management and character of other leading libraries of the country, and to report fully to this board at an early day.

The Chancellor appointed as such committee, Regents Hale, Upson, Brevoort, Curtis, Fitch.



# REPORT.

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*To the Regents of the University of the State of New York :*

The special committee, appointed under the resolution of which a copy is hereto annexed, respectfully report :

That at several meetings they have had under consideration the subject referred to them ; that they have consulted the Secretary of the Regents and the librarians of the general and law departments of the library, and have been largely aided by their suggestions ; that they have given careful consideration to the matters submitted to them, so far as they are covered by the several heads below indicated, and they submit the following views and recommendations under such several heads :

## FIRST.

The first and most important question discussed in the report of the librarian, which was the occasion of the raising of your committee, and which was made by your resolution the foundation of your committee's action, relates to the future development and character of the library and the objects for which it is to be maintained.

The very full and satisfactory discussion of this topic by Mr. Homes in his report obviates any necessity for your committee to go at length over the same ground. They therefore confine themselves to the expression of the following opinions and recommendations :

The scope of the law department of the library has been and should continue to be a broad one. This now stands among the very first libraries of the country. It is believed to be nearly, if not quite, complete in its collection of law reports of the federal courts of the United States, of the highest courts of the several States and of Great Britain, as well as of the statutes of the several States. These make up its greatest value, and of these reports and statutes its collection should be made and kept absolutely complete.

In addition to these, all really standard elementary works touching all departments of municipal law within Great Britain and the United States, together with a reasonable supply of digests, books of practice and hand-books of like character should be kept up. Outside of these the law library, to maintain its proper standing as a completely appointed law library, should contain the leading authorities upon subjects of international and ecclesiastical law, the Roman law, and the laws of the modern continental nations of Europe, especially of France, Germany, Holland and the free cities. A law library is valuable only as it



is complete and all-embracing in volumes liable to be cited by way of authority or illustration.

As to the general department of the library, the line of policy to be pursued in its development, its management, and its proposed ultimate object, is not perhaps capable of quite so clearly defined rules. Your committee submit the following views :

To make this a universal or encyclopedic library is simply out of the question. No appropriation which could be expected from the legislative authorities would cover the expense of an universal collection of publications through the wide range of literature, science and the arts, including the enormous mass of periodical literature, general and special. No manning and equipment of the library, likely to be authorized by the Legislature, would suffice for the management and handling of such a library.

On the other hand, no good reason can be urged for making or seeking to make the library in any just sense a special one, as devoted to science in general or in any of its branches to the fine arts or the useful arts, to philosophy, history or belles-lettres.

The report of the librarian fully and fairly exhibits the purposes of the library in the view of its original founders, and of those who have had it in charge from its foundation to the present time. These purposes are neither universal nor in a strict sense special. But they indicate a line of special or preferred use as clearly marked from first to last in the history of the library.

First, as an aid to officers of the government, legislative, executive, administrative and judicial. Special prominence is, and ought to be, given to the whole range of publications included under the general head of political and social science. Whatever pertains to the science of government in its broadest sense has a peculiar and special place in a library designed for the aid of those who are to administer government. Second, in a "State" library, whatever illustrates the history, character, resources and development of the State, past, present and future, should be peculiarly the subject of collection and preservation.

This includes a wide range, for the history of the State involves, to a large extent, the history of the United States, and of our sister States ; of our neighbors upon this continent ; and of Great Britain, Holland, Germany and France, the Spanish peninsula and Scandinavia, who have contributed, in greater or less degree, to our population, our manners and our laws. In a sense not too broad, the history of the State includes all that touches its geological formation, its geography, its agricultural and mineral resources, its commerce and manufactures, its intellectual development and career, its religious, moral and educational systems, and the life and course of each of them ; in short, everything which illustrates the political organization which we call the State, the territory which it includes, the people who inhabit it and the products of



their physical and intellectual energies; the whole range of animal and vegetable life; of the fruits of human industry, and of the good or evil results of human life found in its past career or present condition.

These two general heads, political and social science, and the State history in its broadest sense, including all that throws light upon the history, condition and character of the State and its inhabitants, seem to your committee to constitute the special subjects upon which the library should be made a full and comprehensive one. In this connection, your committee desire especially to note their appreciation of the importance of liberal collection and preservation of the periodical publications of the State, general and special, including largely the files of State newspapers, which illustrate so fully the daily life of the community.

Taking these as the subjects to which the library is to be more especially devoted, it will of course be understood that these special lines of collection, comprehensive as they are, will not be exclusive of all others. English literature must be liberally represented, but its representation ought ordinarily to be confined to what are recognized as standard or classic works, or new publications of unquestioned merit. The same may be said of French and German literature, and of the Latin and Greek classics and their translations, and of scientific works of general interest. In short, it is not proposed to exclude by any general and inflexible rule anything which, in the judgment of the trustees, may be desirable to aid the legislator, the officer of government, or the general scholar, in the accumulation of valuable knowledge, outside of the specialities which can properly be pursued only with the aid of special collections.

#### SECOND.

Intimately and directly connected with this question, as to the character of the library in respect of its material and composition, is the question as to the practical use of its several departments.

In regard to the law department, it seems to your committee to be sufficient to say that the Legislature has declared it to have been "established for the use of the officers of the government, the courts and the bar, as a library in which shall be gathered books to which such officers may be required to refer, in the exercise of their duties." (Session Laws of 1861, p. 831.)

This declaration is authoritative, and the direction given in the same statute by the Legislature to the trustees to "limit its use to such persons and officers, especially during the sessions of the Legislature and terms of the courts," is and should be controlling.

The ordinary and habitual use of the library room as a study hall, and of its volumes as text-books for law students, is, in the opinion of your committee, inconsistent with the purposes of the library and with the expressed will of the Legislature in relation to it, and should be at once and finally prohibited.



As to the general department of the library, its special devotion in the first instance, to the use of the Legislature and the officers of the State, has already been noted. This use must of necessity be without restriction, except as limited by law, and may properly be taken to include the recreation of the legislator or officer, as well as the subjects of his graver study and investigation.

Beyond this use, it seems to your committee that anything in the nature of a popular use of the library for general and indiscriminate reading, is quite inconsistent with the ends and purposes of the library, as well as with its manning and equipment, thus far provided by the Legislature.

Manifestly, no one will contend that it can be used as a circulating library. Such use is effectually prohibited by the statute. (1 R. S. 216, §§ 6, 7, 8; Laws of 1845, ch. 85, § 1; Laws of 1848, ch. 262, § 3.)

Of course it can be used then as a library of popular reading, only by a reading-room use. Such use is impracticable in the present library to any but a very limited extent, for the want of room, if no other objection existed.

This objection may, of course, be obviated to a large extent in the new library, when completed, if it be desirable that such use of the library be encouraged or permitted. But is such use desirable?

To put the State Library to such use is substantially to make it for the city of Albany a substitute for the local popular libraries which every considerable city and almost every considerable village in this country provides for its own inhabitants.

Such use of the library is, in the opinion of your committee, quite inconsistent with the aim and plan of this library of the State. This library is intended as a *permanent* one, in respect of the individual volumes upon its shelves, as well as of its general character. Not that the volumes are to be kept closed and locked, but that they are to be used only for such purposes of reference and consultation for specific purposes, aside from the general use specifically named in the statutes, as shall leave them substantially uninjured and in fit condition for consultation after the lapse of years, or of generations even.

A popular library for general reading exacts a use of books quite alien in character to such a use as this. It ordinarily would require a large duplication of popular books, where our practice and our resources permit the purchase of but a single copy. And it rapidly reduces the volumes so used to a condition which renders them worthless for a library of reference.

Again, such a use of the library to be anything of general value, involves of necessity a complete re-organization of the managing force of the library, and a large increase of expenditure in its management.

It may be a matter of some difficulty and delicacy always to draw the line between the general and indiscriminate reader, and the person



using the library as one of reference, for proper and legitimate inquiry and investigation ; but with reasonable tact and discretion on the part of the officers in charge, aided by the sufficient publication of a brief and comprehensive general rule on the subject, it is believed that the matter will not be found to involve practical difficulties to any large extent.

In regard to the management of the library in the purchase of books, and the expenditure of the annual appropriation for its use, your committee recommend that the power of the librarian of the general and law departments of the library respectively be enlarged, so as to give to them respectively the control, subject to such general regulations as may be established by the trustees, of proportionate shares of the annual appropriation by monthly, bi-monthly or quarter-yearly instalments, without specific interference or control of the library committee or any of its members, in regard to ordinary purchases. That the librarians shall respectively report fully all their doings in this regard to the library committee, at stated meetings to be fixed by the trustees, and that the committee shall retain its full supervisory power over the purchases to be made from time to time whenever it shall see fit to exercise them, by general directions to the librarians or otherwise. That the present practice of weekly meetings of the library committee be abolished, and that in lieu thereof stated meetings of that committee be held not oftener than once a month, or, perhaps, once in two or three months.

Within the limitations above proposed, and subject always to the supervisory power of the trustees acting either directly or through the standing committee on the library, your committee recommend that the responsible charge of the purchases for the respective departments of the library be vested in the respective librarians.

The approaching transfer of the library to its rooms in the New Capitol, gives occasion for careful consideration and action on the part of the trustees. The proper arrangement of the space allotted to the library, so as to effect the largest amount of shelving in the smallest and most convenient compass, still providing all requisite reading room with the shelving most accessible from it, is a matter demanding the most careful consideration and provision on the part of the responsible managers of the library.

The charge of the construction of the capitol is entrusted by law to other and very competent hands. Your committee have no desire that the trustees of the library should, in any respect, encroach upon the legitimate province of the Commissioners.

But the subject of the best arrangement of the space allotted to the library, in respect to economy of space, both for the viewing and use of the books ; economy of the labor of the officers and assistants in charge ; economy of time in answering the calls of the reader and student, as



well as the conveniences and facilities afforded to the latter, is evidently one pertaining especially to the sphere of those known as "experts."

Your committee cannot doubt that any and all reasonable suggestions in this regard will be welcomed by the Commissioners, and they recommend that this subject be committed to the charge of the committee on the library to act with the aid of the secretary and the librarians.

The transfer to the New Capitol will also give an excellent occasion for a complete and careful revision of the entire system of management of the library, so as to conform it to the practice of the best modern libraries. This will involve the necessity of legislative action, the present organization being fixed by the statute. Your committee have not attempted to shape the proposed legislation on the subject, but earnestly recommend the early and careful attention of the trustees to the subject through the standing library committee.

#### THIRD.

On the subject of a proposed system of public, town, city or village libraries, suggested and discussed in the librarian's report, your committee are not prepared to recommend present definite action.

The Legislature in 1872 (S. L. 1872, vol. 2, chap. 458, page 1065), provided by general act for the establishment of such libraries by any city, village or town choosing to avail itself of the provisions of the act. Your committee are not advised that any library has yet been established or attempted under the provisions of this statute, and the statute is, perhaps, in some respects, deficient in details for practical working.

The proper development of such a system required the most careful forethought and deliberation, not only as to its details, but as to its general scope and practicability. The present financial condition of the country makes the time an inauspicious one to propose the inauguration of such a system, and there may be grave doubts whether action to that end should properly originate from the Regents or its responsibility be cast upon them.

#### FOURTH.

It is understood that the State Museum of Natural History is in need of a working library of scientific books to be kept at its rooms so as to be easily accessible for the scientific work there prosecuted in its different departments. Your committee are of opinion that no objection can exist to the transfer from the general library of such books as may be there found of the special character required, to be kept under the charge of an officer or employee of the museum, who shall also have a special appointment as assistant librarian, without additional expense to the library or its funds, and so as still to keep the control of the books in the hands of the officers of the library, where, of course, it properly belongs. The details of executing this scheme, if adopted by the Regents, should be committed to the regular committees on the library and the museum.



## FINALLY.

In conclusion, your committee again express their appreciation of the valuable report of Mr. Homes referred to them. They consider the topics which it discusses of vital importance to the library and its future character; and in view as well of the importance of its subject-matter as of the method of its discussion, the report seems to your committee worthy of the attentive consideration of the trustees and of the Legislature and the public.

ROB. S. HALE,  
*Chairman, for the Committee.*

## ORDINANCES ADOPTED BY THE TRUSTEES, JANUARY 10, 1879.

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1. *Ordered*, That so much of the report of the special committee on the librarian's report as is embraced under its first head, relating to the future development and character of the library, and the objects for which it is to be maintained, is hereby approved and adopted as the expressed will of this board.

2. *Ordered*, That the librarian of the law department of the library is hereby instructed to enforce the provisions of the concurrent resolution of the Senate and Assembly of 16th April, 1861, declaring it to be the duty of the trustees of the library to secure its uninterrupted use to the purposes named in said resolution, and to limit its use substantially to the persons and officers by said resolution designated. And that to that end the occupation of the room of that department as a study and reading-room, and the use of its volumes as text-books by law students, is prohibited.

3. *Ordered*, That it is the sense of the trustees that the general department of the library is not intended as a popular library for indiscriminate and continuous reading. That the same is primarily designed for the use of the Legislature and officers of the State, and for reference by historical and professional students and those interested in special lines of inquiry. And to carry out in part the purposes of the library, as above expressed, the librarian of the general library is instructed not to deliver to visitors, for general and continuous reading in the library, works of fiction, light literature, travels, literary periodicals and publications of like character.

4. *Ordered*, That the standing committee on the library is instructed to make such arrangements as shall give to the librarians of the general and law departments, respectively, the control of such shares or portions of the annual appropriations for the purchase of books as may from time to time seem proper, with reference to the amount of such appropriations in each year, to enable said librarians to make the ordinary purchases for their respective departments during such specific periods as may be fixed by the committee. That said librarians respectively report in detail, to the committee on the library, at each regular meeting, their purchases since the last previous report, and that the supervisory power of said committee, and of this board, be fully retained. That from and after the first day of February next, the regular meetings of the library committee be on the first Tuesdays of March, May, July, September, November and January, and that the special meetings may be called by the chancellor in his discretion.



5. *Ordered*, That the subject of the provision to be made for the library in the new capitol, named in the report of the special committee on the librarian's report, be referred to the standing committee on the library with power, and that the secretary of the Regents and the librarians of the general and law departments of the library be joined with said committee.

6. *Ordered*, That the subject of the transfer of certain scientific books to the Museum of Natural History, mentioned in the report of the special committee on the librarian's report, be referred to the standing committees on the library and on the Museum of Natural History, to act jointly, with power.

THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW YORK STATE LIBRARY—  
A REPORT MADE TO THE TRUSTEES BY THE LIBRARIAN  
OF THE GENERAL LIBRARY, JANUARY 11, 1878.

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*To the Honorable, the Trustees of the State Library, Regents of the University of the State of New York :*

Frequently during the twenty-three years in which I have been connected with the State Library, I have had occasion to lay before the library committee of the trustees observations on subjects connected with its administration. Some of these observations have referred to such topics as the arrangement and the security of the books, and the interpretation to be given to the rules. Any suggestions of modifications of or additions to the existing rules would naturally encounter reasonable objections to their adoption, and consequently they have remained essentially unchanged since 1856. The librarians have, however, received verbal instructions from time to time, in special cases, for their discreet guidance.

Within three years, two new regulations having been proposed to the committee, regarding the restrictions to be placed upon the delivery of valuable books to total strangers, who brought no card or letter of introduction, the opinion was expressed by the committee that the librarians would naturally be expected to act upon the principles implied in the proposed rules, and that there was no need of embodying them in writing. At a later date, when the topic of new rules was under consideration, it was concluded that, as within a few years the library would be removed to the new capitol, a thorough revision of all the rules would be necessary, and that the subject might be deferred ; and I was requested to prepare, for submission to the trustees, such a revision as should cover the whole ground. And in 1876 the trustees informed the Legislature that they were engaged in preparing such a revision.

As the various regulations adapted to the new conditions in which the library would be placed presented themselves, it became plain that their character must depend upon the nature of the views which should be taken by the trustees of the future development and aim of the library ; upon the principles upon which it was to be enlarged and books to be selected for its shelves, and the special classes of readers to be anticipated.

Sixty years have now elapsed since the State, in 1818, enacted the law for the organization of the State Library, and more than thirty years since the University Board of Regents have been its trustees. In the



prospect of the transfer of the library to the new capitol, with more than ten times as many books upon its shelves as were contained in it when it was delivered into their care, it seems proper that a review should be taken of some aspects of its past history, and of the principles upon which it has been built up, combined with a statement of its present character and uses. The changed condition of things in the country as regards libraries, both since the State created it in 1818, and, also, since the trustees accepted the management of it in 1845, is a still more prominent and important element in the discussion. The completion of the first sixty years of the library, synchronizing so nearly with its removal to the new capitol, suggested that it might be the peculiarly appropriate time to make a studious inquiry of the question of the proper development and uses of the library, in the light of these changes, in the hope that the facts collected would offer a basis for correct judgment as to the regulations desirable to be made.

#### INCREASE OF LIBRARIES IN THE UNITED STATES.

The changes in the country, to which I have referred as having a bearing on the question, are the extraordinary multiplication of the productions of the press, and especially the extraordinary increase of its libraries within the last thirty years all over the country. The ratio of increase, both in this country and in Europe, has had no parallel at any period of human history. It is supposed that 20,000 volumes issue every year from the presses of Great Britain, France and Germany, without counting the United States. On this estimate, 25,000 and even 30,000 new works would be a moderate allowance for the annual production of the world in all languages. Mr. Laborde's estimate, made two years since, was of 35,000 works for the world in each year. It was an unprecedented event when the British Museum tripled its contents in one-third of a century, from 1822 to 1857.\* Thirty-four free town libraries were established in large cities of England from 1852 to 1865.† The ratio of increase of town libraries in France has been 65 per cent in the short space of three years previous to 1876, 1,500 popular libraries having been founded within that period, besides 1,700 school libraries. There were in 1877, 3,946 of these free town libraries.

There may be room for doubt which have increased in the largest proportion, the productions of the press, or the libraries in which to preserve them.

The increase of libraries is still more astonishing in the United States.

In the year 1800, there were but 49 libraries, containing an aggregate of only 80,000 volumes. Of these 49 libraries, 12 were in the State of New York, being chiefly county law libraries or academy libraries of a few hundred volumes each. In the year 1818, the libraries of this State

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\* Edwards, *Memoirs of Libraries*, ii, 695.

† Edwards, *Town Libraries*, p. 217.



were, as far as reported, only 27, and were mostly very small.‡ From these small beginnings we come to the contrast of the present year, when the whole number of libraries has reached 3,682. Of these, 2,240 have been organized since the year 1850; and all the libraries contain 13,000,000 volumes, not counting those in common or Sunday schools. In several of our cities, close upon a million of books may be found in the various libraries of each. Of the whole number, 627 public libraries, of more than 300 volumes each, are in the State of New York, and they contain in all more than 2,000,000 of volumes, of which 1,000,000 may be found in the city of New York alone. That city in 1818 did not possess probably in its various public libraries more than 12,000 volumes. In Albany, the Institute had 190 volumes, and Albany City Library perhaps 2,000 volumes.

The city of Philadelphia has about 1,000,000 volumes in its public libraries, and the city of Boston, including Harvard College, has a similar number; while Washington contains libraries more valuable probably than the million of books found in either of these cities, though amounting only to 650,000 volumes. Chicago, Cincinnati, St. Louis and San Francisco are also rapidly concentrating large libraries. Two hundred and sixty-six of these libraries (containing more than half of this 13,000,000 of volumes) have more than 10,000 volumes each, with an average of 26,000 volumes each.

Five-sixths of all the donations to the public by individual gifts for libraries, including the value of the real estate for them, and amounting probably to more than 30,000,000 of dollars in value, have been given within the last 30 years. The city of Chicago has received the gift of property this year from a single estate, that of the late W. L. Newberry, whose present value is 5,000,000 of dollars, mainly for the interests of its free public library. The purpose of the trustees is to make it at the same time the most complete reference library in the country.

These facts constitute the remarkable contrast between the present condition of the country in respect to its libraries and its condition in 1818, or even its condition in 1845. They demonstrate that libraries have assumed a position of importance in the estimation of the public which they did not then possess. They make it seem a reasonable necessity that at the end of three decades of years, an examination should be made to see what bearing these facts and others related to them may have, not only upon the country and State generally, but upon this State Library in particular; that, if possible, it may be discovered whether they suggest anything that should affect the principles to be

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‡ Some of the following facts are compiled from that remarkable encyclopedia of information regarding the libraries of the country, the volume entitled, *Public Libraries of the United States of America, their history, condition and management. Special Report.* Department of the interior, Bureau of education. Washington, 1876: pp. 1187, 8vo. In a paper in that volume on the history and character of the State libraries of the country, I have several times alluded to the New York State Library, and occasionally in this report I repeat observations contained in that paper.



applied to its development, or lead to any modification of past plans and measures ; whether in this remarkable and encouraging aspect of the country, as regards its libraries, there is any occasion for the trustees to deliberate anew on the relations of the State Library to the wants of the people, the government and the State.

#### TOPICS OF INQUIRY.

The time may have come to define its aims more emphatically than was reasonable or possible in the past, when libraries of every kind were extremely few. Rapidly growing libraries are now to be found at all important centres in the United States, and particularly in a large number of the cities and towns of the State of New York. Several cities have more volumes in their libraries than are to be found in our own State Library, though it is two and a half times larger than any other state library. A clear specification of the object and aims of the library would also possess a practical value as information to the Legislature and the public generally. Upon the character of the conclusions arrived at would depend in a large measure the amount necessary for the expenditure of each year, as will appear in the sequel of this report.

Some of the topics of inquiry, which the new condition of things regarding libraries brings up to our minds as appropriate for investigation at the present time, are the following: In the expenditure of the annual grants of the Legislature, what are the principles which should control in the selection of books for its shelves? What exceptions or limitations of classes of books shall be made? Shall it be enlarged more than hitherto in the direction of the sciences? Shall its list of periodicals extend to several hundreds, as in the Cooper Institute, Philadelphia and Boston libraries? Shall more books be bought in foreign languages, the Greek and the Latin, the French and the German, and others? Shall the library confine itself to a few topics, like American history, and books pertinent to the legislator, and other special subjects? or, shall it be universal and encyclopedic in its aims, welcoming all knowledge, literature and science, everything, large and small, old and new, that may be obtainable in print? The decision that may be made upon these questions would afford a satisfactory basis for preparing rules and regulations, harmonizing with the decision.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF THIS LIBRARY IN THE PAST.

Much aid can be given towards reaching a decision upon these questions, by a review of the manner in which the library has been regarded in the past by the legislature and the trustees.

Within the same five years in which this library was founded, and at a time when the whole number of States was but 22, five State libraries were created. It is evident that impressions, derived from observing the destitution of the whole country, were operating upon the minds of



the legislators of that day, and leading them to endeavor to stimulate the intellectual activity of the people by means of libraries. The purpose of this library was no further defined in the act of 1818 than to say it was "to establish a public library for the use of the government and of the people of the State." The first purchase of 600 volumes, made by DeWitt Clinton, as chairman of the committee, embraced books of every class, in law especially, and in history, literature and science; and the same classes of books have continued to be purchased, under both of the boards of trustees to the present time, so that the library corresponds fairly to its name of a general library. In 1835, the trustees, Messrs. Bronson, Dix, and Flagg, report, that the library contained 5,000 volumes, the majority of which were law books, and they add that outside of law they "have for the most part selected standard works on American history, politics and legislation, with such foreign publications of general interest as are not usually found in our society and individual libraries." In 1840 they speak of the meagre appropriation for books "of a scientific character, and particularly such as relate to statistics, and to which members of the legislature and the executive and administrative officers of the State must have recourse for the information indispensable to the discharge of their duties." Five years after, in 1845, the Regents of the University, who had become its trustees, in their first report, say of the library: "The additions made to it consist for the major part of works relating to our own State and country. The trustees were desirous to show as early as possible that they esteem this a paramount object, and to accumulate as far as was in their power every work of interest or value relating to the United States." And farther on in the same report they say: "This portion of the library is particularly defective in treatises on education, political economy and practical science. These subjects, with that of American history, will be attended to so far as the limited means that are appropriated will permit." Their first year of service was inaugurated by the receipt of the Warden collection of 2,000 volumes, purchased by the State for \$4,000, which was composed of works entirely on American history. In 1848, the trustees emphasize their earnest attention to increase the works relating to our own country, and state that the cost of the works by American authors and on America are more than enough to absorb all the funds appropriated. In 1849, the trustees state that the library is "taking high rank among such as are rich in works relating to our own country.....Particular attention has been bestowed in collecting .....all such as are written by our fellow-countrymen .....they have directed their unremitting attention to this subject." In other years, as 1859, 1865 and 1867, they repeat the same sentiment; in 1876 speaking with satisfaction of the additions in the branch of American genealogies. During these 30 years they also, from time to time, refer with pleasure to the additions, not only in law, but in "literature, science and art," as in



1846, 1847, 1851, 1857, 1870; and in 1859 they referred to the securing of books "beyond the means of ordinary students." The subject of works on statistics is referred to both by the earlier and later trustees as one on which they desire to secure books. It follows from this review of the reports, that while the library has been steadily enlarged with works in literature, science and art, its only special objects have been law, legislative topics and American history, and with this accords the last official utterance on the subject, that of Governor Robinson, who, in his message this year, singles out two branches of knowledge regarding which to call the attention of the legislature as prominent in the library. He says: "In the departments of law and American history it is unsurpassed by any other State library of the Union."

#### USE AS A REFERENCE LIBRARY.

These extracts exhibit the views of the trustees from the foundation of the library as to the character of the books to be collected. As to the manner of their use, it has been essentially and mainly a library for reference, and not for loaning and circulation outside of the capitol. In its first organization, the regulations state that "no book.....shall be at any time taken out of the library on any pretense whatever," either by members of the legislature, the heads of the departments of government, the judges of the highest courts, or finally by the trustees. Afterwards by successive enactments the privilege of drawing books was extended to each one of these bodies. In 1845, the trustees suggested to the legislature that it would perhaps be desirable that the privilege should also be given to persons engaged in historical and scientific investigations, but no further action was taken on the subject. In 1867 and in 1872, the trustees specifically speak of the library as a "reference library" in their reports. All the rules for the use of the library down to 1855 seem to relate to the members of the legislature and official persons, and little is said about its use by the general public, and no provision is made for its use by youth. Section 4 of rules of the trustees does not define who have the use of the library, but merely describes the process for all persons to obtain their books by means of written cards. For twelve or fifteen years till 1834 it was only kept open during the sessions of the legislature and the courts. The general library was in the same room with the law library. The trustees, Messrs. G. C. Bronson, J. A. Dix and A. C. Flagg, in that last-mentioned year recommend that the library should be entirely closed except during the sessions of the legislature and of the courts. And as late as the year 1860, the joint library committee of the legislature, in the formal report to that body signed by the eight members, recommend that "the library during the sessions of the legislature should be regarded chiefly as an appendage to the senate and assembly rooms, and the admission should be confined to the state officers



and members of the legislature, and persons introduced by them.”\* And this committee requested the trustees to frame rules in accordance with this conclusion.

The nature of the use of the library as a reference library is repeatedly described by the trustees in their reports as legal, legislative, historical and scientific. In the process of enlarging it as a reference library, it has become one of the most complete in the country in the department of American history. Its relative completeness in one branch may be inferred from the fact that of the 261 works referred to by Durrie in his *Index to American genealogies, contained in town histories*, this library possesses 258 of them. As a pendant to American history the library is abundantly supplied with works on the history of Great Britain, including Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and with standard English literature. The history of Europe, and of the Netherlands especially, has not been neglected. There are several thousands of volumes in the library in Greek, Latin, French, German and other languages. While steadily enlarging it as one of historical reference, the trustees have uniformly made prudent purchases of books in most of the branches of general knowledge suitable for a reference library, as far as the funds at their disposal would admit. The qualifications to this statement are that works on law are bought solely for the law library; in medicine, sets of standard periodicals only are procured and not professional treatises; in theology, the limit is its history. Agriculture is left for the collections of the State Agricultural Society. The Dudley Observatory has its own library of 800 volumes on astronomy, and the State Museum a growing collection on natural history; Union University has a valuable classical and mathematical library. And besides, in the libraries of Albany, Schenectady and Troy combined there are in all 125,000 volumes.

#### DEMAND FOR BOOKS.

Although the library contains some books of great value in many of the sciences in literature and the arts, yet, with the exception of American history, the books which we possess in any one branch of study are relatively so few that the attraction they offer to the specialist is not strong enough to draw him from abroad to make his researches here, if he can make it convenient to go to the large and continually increasing general and special collections in the other cities to which we have before referred. The demand is so slight for general history or scientific works that there is nothing to guide in the preparation of lists of books for the consideration of the library committee beyond general principles and intrinsic values. Those who by law have the right to draw books from the library are those, the pressure of whose avocations leaves them very little time to read and study in the library.

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\* New York Senate documents, No. 67, 1860.



It is gratifying to be able to state that there is, however, a steady increase in the use of the library in that department to which the trustees have given special attention, the department of American history, including genealogies. The genealogical branch is of great importance in all biographical researches, and works of that character can only be found collectively in public libraries, and many avail themselves of our comparatively very large collection. The number of applications to consult the 3,000 volumes of American, British and French patents in the library amounts to at least 400 in a year.

#### INCREASED DUTIES OF THE LIBRARIANS.

The views of the trustees, that this library is one for historical and scientific research chiefly, are further shown by the fact that the general library for the last twenty years has been left to the care of a single librarian and an assistant, without any messenger. The duties annually discharged by them have involved perpetual study for the preparation of lists of books to purchase for the approval of the library committee, the cataloguing on cards in detail the titles of all the books purchased, preparing simultaneously the cards of a subject-index for these books, the superintending all the details of binding and lettering, the rewriting the lists of books for the annual reports of the library, the assorting, binding and cataloguing 50,000 pamphlets in more than 2,000 volumes, and the preparation and the carrying through the press more than 3,000 pages, (additional to the annual reports), of catalogues of the books, manuscripts, maps and coins, including a subject-index of the general library. Many manuscripts and maps have been received, assorted and bound, and catalogued in separate MS. catalogues. Besides all this, the books have been kept in order on the shelves, attention has been paid to visitors, books have been delivered to readers and borrowers daily, combined with a large correspondence with inquirers for information. The librarians, like the clerks of a public office, are addressed from all parts of the United States and called upon by visitors, for information on a multitude of topics. A great proportion of readers of all classes, whether the learned, or the young occupied with their themes for essays, expect and are grateful for whatever portion of his time a librarian can give to facilitate them in their researches.

The regular work in the library has also greatly increased within the last few years. A considerable part of the increase is due to the services to be performed in connection with the 3,000 volumes of patents, of which formerly we had none, and the additional labor resulting from the crowded state of the shelves, upon which the books have to be placed in double rows. But one of the chief causes is the increase of the population of the capital. Albany has more than doubled in population—having 90,000 inhabitants—since the Regents became the trustees of the library, and the number of pupils in its public and private schools, male



and female academies, high school, normal school, law and medical schools, have increased in larger proportion.

#### INFLUENCE OF THE CREATION OF POPULAR FREE LIBRARIES.

No single cause has so much tended to give importance to this growth of the city, and to occasion an increased use of the State Library, as the establishment of free town libraries for popular use, and the influence of their existence upon the usages of the schools and the citizens.

While the State has been creating and enlarging a reference library for the legislator, the scientist and the advanced student, the progress of the age has brought forward a new phenomenon of the century—the popular free library, for cities and towns of whatever size. The system of establishing them was inaugurated by special acts in England and Massachusetts, about the same time, in the year 1851, and originated in part from the failure of society or subscription libraries, and school district libraries to secure valuable results.

The modern free library is an institution through which the education of the people is kept up while they are in the public schools, and is continued after they have left them, and it is well called the people's university. It is principally a loaning library of popular works, and includes both a reference library and reading-room for periodicals, if the funds at disposal will permit. In many of these libraries the average amount of works of fiction perused by the readers has been 75 per cent. The statement conveys a wrong impression, unless the other fact is also brought out, that a large number of the readers are under 18 years of age, and that these fictions are very frequently juvenile books of the most elevating kind. The zeal and wisdom of librarians is progressively successful in introducing a better class of reading. In the National Library of Paris, novels were largely introduced into the people's reading-room to make it attractive when first opened; but since that has been a success, many of the novels have been gradually withdrawn.\*

Under the influence of the stimulus of this creation of the century, the youth of the schools, and of the city generally, frequent the library at all seasons of the year. They come, under impulses received from their teachers, to read upon the topics of the essays assigned to them for exhibitions, and to study the questions to be debated in their literary societies. The services of the librarians are constantly requested to find a book on "perseverance," on "character," or the like; or to collect from the shelves the numerous volumes of reviews (as they have been learned by the reader from Poole's Index to Periodicals), which contain articles on free trade, or capital punishment, etc. During the winter months a large portion of the librarians' time is consumed in collecting and delivering novels, Harper's Monthly, and recreative reading to young men

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\* France : Min. de l'instruction publique : Rapports sur la bibliothèque nationale, 1876.



and women, when there is no work to be had in some of the trades, and the library is warm and comfortable.

#### OBJECT OF THE LIBRARY.

Noticing the prominent and overshadowing use of the library for trivial ends, and recalling the facts which we have mentioned in the history of the library, the question comes up and demands an answer, is this the use for which the library was especially designed? If the answer to this question is not sufficiently obvious, there are various additional illustrations to confirm the view that it was not designed as an educational and recreative institution, at the expense of the State, for the young and uneducated. In the first place, the character of the books upon our shelves presents several marked features in contrast with those which are found upon the shelves of a public town library. We usually only purchase one copy of a work, for consultation; the popular library may purchase scores of copies of the same work. We purchase our books for perpetual preservation; the popular library purchases them with the expectation that multitudes of them will be worn out by use. The report of the Boston Public Library of 1877 gives the number of 2,800 volumes as condemned during the preceding twelve months, as "worn out by legitimate use." Our books are chiefly for occasional reference, or the perusal of students who are specialists; the popular library serves for continuous and promiscuous reading for intellectual improvement or recreation. If we have juvenile books, they are for some relation to literary history; in the popular library, all the juvenile fictions are collected to be used and worn out. If we have educational text-books, grammars, geographies and readers, they are for the comparisons of teachers and the historian, and not for the use of pupils. In the popular libraries, even, they are informed that such books are not to be used as text-books. If we have Indian captivities, adventures in the Rocky Mountains, and the like, they are not for the purpose of startling sensations, but for the students of the earliest things in our country's history.

We have a moderate number of works of fiction. Many of them are gifts. The purchases of novels have been made either for the occasional relaxation of the representative servants of the State, or because they illustrate the literary history of the country. For this purpose we ought to have first editions of Paulding, Irving, Cooper and others, not for ordinary reading, but for consultation.

And so with all copies of first editions of books, by American authors, books constantly becoming rare. They should not be delivered out for daily reading, either in or out of the library, to run the risk of being speedily worn out. They ought not to be sacrificed to the mere desire of a reader for a novel or other book for amusement. If the book of a certain author must necessarily be given out to every reader, simply



because it is on the shelves, then we should provide, if possible, several modern copies of these books, or cease to purchase books which are too rare for popular use.

It is not our multitude of rare and valuable books which are exposed to so much use as to be worn out. The occasional use for research would not produce the result. The difficulty arises chiefly in respect to the very books which are *not* rare and costly. They are books, however, which for various reasons after the lapse of a few years become so ; and it is for this class that the demand is sure to be so great that they will be worn out, and must be condemned, if no restriction be placed upon their use ; for they will not be on hand, or cannot be purchased for use, when wanted, and much trouble, time and money will be expended before copies can be found to supply their place. The following are a few of these books, naturally very attractive by their titles or subjects to the young, in reference to which, if the library is not to be treated as a town popular library, the constant and promiscuous use of such is the question which this report brings before the trustees for their decision : Algerine Captive ; Artemus Ward ; Barnum's Humbugs ; Drake's Book of the Indians ; Flint's Indian Wars ; Gleason's Pictorial ; Harper's Monthly ; Hall's Tales of the Border ; Hall's Legends of the West ; Paulding's Works, first editions ; Anne Royall's Travels ; Simms' Life of Marion ; Trenck's Life. The object has been not to include in this list any books which, on moral considerations, would probably be objectionable in the mind of any person to their being delivered to all readers.

While the character and aim of the popular library justify the delivery to all readers of books of this character, yet it was not the purpose for which the trustees of this library put them on the shelves, that they should serve for a pastime to young or old, or even to educate their minds by creating a taste for good reading, or to gratify a taste already formed ; but rather for the purpose of forming a consulting library for the advanced student in history.

#### THE COMBINED POPULAR AND REFERENCE LIBRARY.

If it should be the conclusion of the trustees and of the legislative authorities that the library, while managed as a reference library, is at the same time to be managed as a popular library, it would be necessary to have it conformed to the aims of one. If it is to be virtually an educational institution, a people's college, it should be administered in a manner commensurate with the object, and to bring credit and honor to the State ; in a manner not to be surpassed by the best conducted popular library of any city. The decision would make it necessary to change the character of the purchases of books to those of current literature, including a large proportion of fiction and juveniles, and not only to duplicate our choice editions by common editions, but in the case of



fictions to have many duplicates of each. It would make it necessary to provide a large staff of assistants, which will be indispensable if the library is to be as useful as possible for the purposes assigned to it.

If it is determined that it is to be in the future a popular library without distinction of readers, the conclusion, if consistently carried out, will more than triple the expenses of the library for assistants, and for the purchase of the books appropriate for use in a popular library.

Of the \$124,000 spent the last year by the Public Library of Boston, only \$24,000 were spent for books, and the remainder, \$100,000, were spent for ordinary expenses and the salaries of 130 persons employed in the library and its branches. Of these employ  s, eight are in the executive department, and 18 in the cataloguing department. From the statistics of 58 libraries in this country, having more than 10,000 volumes each, it appears that they spent in 1875 \$278,000 for the purchase of books, and \$457,000 for salaries. The City Library of Cincinnati in 1875, with an income of \$41,000, spent \$22,000 for books and \$18,000 for salaries; while the Public Library of Chicago, in 1876, from an income of \$27,500, spent \$4,000 for books, \$3,800 for binding and \$11,000 for salaries.

The additional expense incurred in conducting a library as a free popular library inures chiefly to the advantage of the city where the library is situated. But many of the cities and towns of this State, by arrangements of diverse character, are providing themselves with such libraries. In the cities, towns and villages, not counting New York city or the school district libraries, there are already more than a million of books collected in their libraries. In coming years, with what amount will the representatives of the people, representatives coming from these very towns, be ready to subsidize this library from funds obtained by State taxation, that it may be conducted as a free popular library for the advantage of a single city and its vicinity? State libraries exist primarily for ends beneficial to the whole State. They are not designed to provide the current literature for the citizens of a single city. It would be an undesirable result if, by facilities of this kind, the inhabitants of a capital should be made more backward than they otherwise would be in establishing libraries for themselves, or if they should be drawn away from sustaining, by their contributions, existing social and subscription libraries. At the time when this library was first established, the Albany Library, founded in 1792 as a society subscription library, had 4,000 volumes, and the use of it for consultation was free to all, but in 1835 it was, while having, as reported, 9,000 volumes, deposited in a room of the Albany Female Academy, and the company practically ceased to exist.

If it is determined that it is not a popular library, the regulations regarding its use should correspond to the nature of the uses aimed at.



While it harmonizes with the plan of a reference library that it may have a comparatively limited staff of assistants, it does not harmonize with it that, in addition to the classes of work performed as already described, a single librarian and an assistant should have the duty of delivering books as for the readers of a popular library. At present, while the librarians have their regular duties, and are amply employed in aiding those who wish to use the library for its legitimate purposes, they are at the same time, in accordance with its prevailing usages, giving out books to any that ask, without identification, registration or introduction, amounting frequently to from 50 to 70 readers in a day. No person is occupied in maintaining a surveillance of the hall. There is some restriction upon the class of books that may be delivered, owing to the confidence repeatedly shown by the legislature that the librarians would not abuse their discretionary power of refusing in certain defined cases. During from four to six months the crowd at the tables in the winter, during the whole of the last 20 years, has been so great both in the general and the law libraries, that members of the legislature have frequently complained that they could find no place to sit down.

The catalogues and indexes which they are required to prepare and print cannot be issued with that detail, care and completeness that the age demands of an institution so large and so prominent as the New York State Library, if the librarians, fully occupied with the duties of a growing library, and attentive to the wants of consulting students and others using the library legitimately, are to have the larger part of their time occupied with the cares and uses of a popular library.

#### UNIVERSAL AND ENCYCLOPEDIA LIBRARIES.

The question recurs again, if the library is not to be a popular library, on what principle shall it be developed? Shall it be enlarged as an encyclopedic and universal library, or as one of special aims? Or, shall it be enlarged without any special purpose, other than to accept or purchase, in addition to works of American history, anything that offers itself that seems intrinsically valuable, or likely to have a value for some person in the future? Shall it be as comprehensive in its scope as the national libraries of London, Paris, Berlin, Munich and St. Petersburg? They are enlarged upon the principle of preserving everything which has been printed which is attainable for money or by gift, and of which they have not a copy; and the same is true for all manuscripts. The British Museum spends \$100,000 a year on books alone. It is well to recall that for the one or two libraries in each kingdom of this all-embracing character, we already have one in our country of corresponding scope in the National Library at Washington, which, with 350,000 volumes already collected, is asking Congress for a separate edifice that shall ultimately be capable of receiving 2,000,000 volumes, to be larger than the largest library of Europe. Are there strong reasons why our



State Library should imitate these examples? And, if such a library is to be aimed at by New York, is it also to be the aim of the 40 State libraries, to make their collections large in the same encyclopedic way, so far as the funds at their disposal will admit?

In partial answer to the question, it is clear that it was certainly most excellent wisdom on the part of New York and other States to found State libraries. It gave to all their towns the stimulus of a good example. Especially was it a wise policy in the early settlement and organization of the Territories, that with the aid of Congress they should go on building up both general and law libraries, for their capitals were the only towns where libraries could possibly be formed. But after that the centres of aggregation of population in a State have become clearly defined, the most natural place for building up encyclopedic libraries will be those cities where men most do congregate. Our State capitals are rarely such places; only four of them are in towns containing more than 50,000 inhabitants; most of the States contain cities far surpassing their capitals in population. The cities of Baltimore, Chicago, Cincinnati, New York, Philadelphia, St. Louis and San Francisco already contain four or five times as many volumes in their libraries as may be found in their capitals. In New York city, the Astor Library alone has an endowment at the present time of \$410,000 for its annual expenditure for books and salaries. Boston is a capital, and by usage and law its State library is limited and special. It aims at collecting "the best legal, political, historical, statistical, economic and scientific works which tend to illustrate the history, exhibit the resources, direct the labor and capital, and perfect the legislation of the State and country."\* Our own capital is not an imperial one, though the capital of an empire State. It is not a great centre of population; but as its State Library is in a city which has no large general library (though it has 13 libraries containing in all over 60,000 volumes), it might be alleged that it should therefore be sustained as an encyclopedic library and in the spirit of a national library. This is indeed the very question we are discussing, and much may be urged in favor of it. But it certainly deserves to be considered, whether with our great National Library at Washington, and eight other prominent centres where large libraries are already collected, which will be steadily enlarged, it is the most useful plan to collect at the expense of the State, at the capital, books and pamphlets in every branch of knowledge, and all printed matter that can be obtained. For many years at least its deficiencies would be melancholy to contemplate and the supply be to little purpose, for men of research will only go to those very cities mentioned where they can find the largest collections. The history of the use of the library for the last 20 years proves this, as has been before observed.

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\* Mass. Library Catalogue, 1858.

† United States Libraries Report, 1876, p. 684.



We frequently hear the remark made that the legislature ought annually to appropriate some very large sum for the increase of the library. There are contingencies which would make a large annual appropriation both desirable and necessary; such as, if it were determined to administer it as a popular library, or if a State university were to be established at the capital. With any clear, definite and important objects, the State might be eager to make large annual appropriations. But when the consequences entailed by a large increase of books are brought to mind, the fact that with its increase comes demands for proportionate increase in expenses for buildings and for the keeping of the books, there may well be hesitation unless the motives are strong. The immense reach of an encyclopedic library is shown by this fact; the library of Congress has twice doubled in thirteen years, and it contains publications of 2,000 different learned societies, not counting its scientific periodicals.†

It would seem unavoidably necessary that the trustees should declare, either that the library is to be all-embracing and encyclopedic, or that besides books on American history, those in two, four or more branches of knowledge shall be especially collected. The hundreds of sciences and arts, the immense realm of universal history and the literature of all nations are a tantalizing field to glean in. At present, without definite aims, one is compelled to go over the multitudes of catalogues of books for sale, having no limiting principal of selection. If it should be decided that the library is not encyclopedic, but one of certain definite aims, it would be comparatively easy to choose books within the categories which should be designated.

#### A LIBRARY OF LAW, LEGISLATION AND AMERICAN HISTORY.

If it should be decided that the library is one of special aims, the question comes up to what classes of books should attention be especially directed in making purchases? In accordance with the invariable action of the trustees, the first class to be mentioned would be law, then American history, followed by political economy, including all topics of legislation, and also the latest encyclopedias and statistics. Of the law department there is no occasion for any remark. But it is worth observing that the field of American history is not merely of the United States, or of North America, but the whole new world; not merely its history popularly so called, its civil and political history, but also whatever illustrates the whole continent of North and South America, in its geography, its geology, zoölogy, botany, ethnology and philology. It may embrace its literature, poetry and fiction, the productions of all its authors in all languages, its school books, controversies, periodicals and newspapers. There is no library that is attempting anything on so thorough and comprehensive a scheme as that is. Our library in this department is already so strong that it would be comparatively easy to increase its relative



strength, unless in unique printed volumes and manuscripts. The limitation of purchases to the topics mentioned should result, with the progress already made, in obtaining a collection more remarkable, valuable and useful than any existing in this country in these branches.

It would be one result of this principle of special aims that more time would be found to give prominence to collections relative to the history of New York State, in its most comprehensive meaning, general and local, than is possible under the present system; while no topic is more interesting or important to the people of the State. We interpret the phrase New York history with the same latitude of meaning as that of American history. It would embrace collections from the presses of every county in the State, the proceedings of towns and counties, their newspapers, society reports and directories; and would become so complete as to compel every person with a query on a New York fact to come to its State Library to pursue his search. Collections of the manuscripts of past public officers of the State and of other States give eminent distinction. A library is held in more repute and esteem by the public when known to possess unique manuscripts or complete collections on special topics, than by holding possession of numbered thousands of unknown volumes.

Are not the history of the new world and of the State of New York, conjoined with a library especially adapted to the legislature and the courts, sufficiently comprehensive subjects with which to fill a large library? In the department of American history including the new works constantly issuing from the press, on the thorough and comprehensive scheme of collecting which we have described, there are enough books to absorb with those on political economy and statistics all the appropriations likely to be obtained from the State. The rate of increase would fill the library hall of the new capitol in a much shorter time than one would suppose. Our present library, with its moderate annual appropriation, is twice full at the end of 23 years from its first occupation, the books standing in double rows on the shelves, and piled on the floors of the gallery and in the cellar. An annual appropriation slightly enlarged would procure for the general and law libraries, under the limitation of a library of special reference, enough books to make it practically more useful than by general purchases on every subject.

"No one library, however, large or comprehensive, has either the space or the means to accumulate a tithe of the periodicals that swarm from a productive press."\* Seven thousand eight hundred and eighty-seven periodical publications appeared in the United States in the year 1876. In the State of New York alone there are periodically published every year 880 newspapers and magazines. Of these 47 are in German and 16 in other foreign languages. Each of the leading New York dailies makes two stout and thick volumes a year.

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\* United States Library Report, 1876. Dr. Spofford's paper, p. 681.



Mr. Sabin is publishing in New York a dictionary of books on America and of those by American authors. The work as far as printed reaches only to the word Hun, and already makes eight volumes of 575 pages each, showing that the whole list will make 25 such volumes, a larger catalogue than any now existing. A few such facts illustrate the extent potentially of a library peculiarly American. They prove what a vast field lies before us in collecting merely valuable and historical productions of the American and New York press.

#### LIBRARIES WITH SPECIAL AIMS.

In terminating what I had to say on the future increase of the library, I would add that no one of these plans, either the special, encyclopedic, or the popular library, is suggested as under all circumstances best or most desirable; but I have mentioned some of the characteristics of each, convinced that the time has arrived when it is important to obtain instructions from your honorable board as to the future course to be pursued. It is from no want of sympathy with the popular library, far otherwise, but for the purpose of laying before the trustees the actual use of the library, and the advantages and difficulties of different modes of administering it.

The process of specializing our libraries to increase their utility is a necessary result of human progress, and of the differentiation of the objects of human knowledge and thought, from a few studies and sciences to a multitude. The plan of developing every library that is not encyclopedic by making it strong in some specialties is greatly recommended by experts. Mr. Edwards lays it down as a general principle: "It will be well to fix upon some main subjects of a general kind in which the library shall be especially well provided."† He observes that: "For some time past it has been contended that each of the libraries of Paris should have a specific character, and be administered with a view to the special requirements of a particular class of readers."‡ At the London conference of librarians, October, 1877, Mr. Harrison, of the London Library, laid down as one of three necessities of a library that it should have "special or local appropriateness," giving as an instance of the contrary where a provincial library spent £100 for 150 folio volumes of the London Gazette. In the pursuit of this idea the library of the United States Surgeon General's department has reached an astonishing perfection. The 13,000 volumes in the library of the Boston Society of Natural History suggest again how much can be done in special departments. Our State Library in the first stages of its existence might well receive everything; as the wants of society become more complex, and many centres have arisen well supplied with books, can it not make itself more useful by selecting its specialties, and allow others more favorably situated to be more comprehensive in their aims?

† *Memoirs of Librtries* I, 574.

‡ *Town Libraries*, p. 217.



## A GENERAL LAW FOR PUBLIC TOWN LIBRARIES.

Before proceeding farther, I hope I may be indulged with an observation having a close affinity with the subject of the report. The formation of encyclopedic and reference libraries on the one hand, and of free popular libraries throughout the country on the other, is of the greatest importance, and especially the formation of the latter in all cities and towns is one of the most promising and fruitful ideas of this century. No more honorable lot can befall any man than an opportunity to aid in creating, endowing, sustaining or guiding one. The thought is this, that if the course which the trustees may adopt should seem to limit the use of the State Library, there is another measure which, if it should be submitted by them as the University of the State to the legislature, would doubtless meet with its approbation, a measure which would ultimately secure advantages to millions in the State, while the freest use of the State Library would be an accommodation only to thousands. The proposed measure is the passage of a general law authorizing the towns of the State to establish free public libraries by local tax. The passage of such a law, at the suggestion of your honorable board, would prove that if it were not possible for them to make the State Library available as a popular library, that above all they did not undervalue the popular library in its proper sphere.

Such a law has already been passed within the last 25 years in Great Britain and in 11 of the States of this Union, the last two of which are Illinois and Texas. In Massachusetts, of the 346 cities and towns in the State, 127 towns have provided themselves with free libraries since the first passage of the law allowing it to be done by local taxation. In 1872 a law was enacted by the State of New York allowing towns to establish public libraries by a tax of \$1 upon every legal voter, and 50 cents a year for maintenance. The law, so far as I am informed, has been inoperative. In the Librarians' Conference in New York, September, 1877, measures were adopted for drafting a form for a general law for town libraries adapted to all the States, in which should be embodied the results of the experience of the States where town libraries are sustained by a local tax. The zeal of the friends of free libraries is exhibited in their exertions that this means of elevating the community shall be turned to the best account. A proof of this is shown in the simultaneous suggestions from different writers, that to make libraries of the highest possible utility there should be in the schools and colleges professorships of books and reading, to guide to the best and most useful books, and the best methods of reading. Three papers from different authors, in the United States Libraries' Report, propose such a course; but perhaps the earliest formal essay in behalf of the measure was read by Prof. Robinson, of Rochester, N. Y., before the New York University Convocation of 1876. The scheme has already received



practical application at Harvard University by its appointment of the late librarian of the Boston Public Library as both librarian and professor of reading.

New York, which took the lead in the popular library system, by being the first to organize district school libraries, in 1835, will not long remain behind any of the other States in such a progressive movement. It is indeed true that owing to the smallness of the sum to be received from the State, where \$50,000 is annually to be distributed to 12,000 district schools, the system has not been a success, and is gradually breaking down. The district school libraries are being converted into union school libraries, and in accordance with the recommendation of the Superintendent of Instruction, free town libraries will doubtless gradually take their place. But if, from her experiments with district libraries, results so favorable to town libraries have followed, there is more ground for encouragement than discouragement as respects general progress.

The representations of the Board of Regents to the legislature in behalf of such a town free library law would receive the enthusiastic support of the people of most of the towns of the State, and the law, when in operation, would tend to give an additional attraction to home life on every hill and in every valley of the State.

#### NEW REGULATIONS; PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

Having now reached the topic which was the original occasion of the remarks on the preceding pages, the character of the regulations to be proposed, it is to be observed that whatever principles may be adopted by the trustees regarding the future increase of the library and its use, the necessity for the regulation of this use by the general public by new rules will still exist. The regulations hitherto in force, chiefly concerning the representatives of the people, show by their minuteness and detail that the legislature and trustees have always aimed to protect the library from injury and loss. The occasion for rules not hitherto introduced arises from the increased number using the library as a popular library, from the extent to which it will always be used by strangers, and its greater publicity and use by visitors when transferred to the new Capitol. After the transfer of the library to the present edifice, the crowd of readers during several successive winters made so much disturbance that it was necessary to employ a policeman daily to preserve order. It is desirable to anticipate any such possible consequences.

Economy of administration, the highest usefulness of the library, and the security of the books from damage or loss will always require occasional re-adjustments of regulations. In proportion as care is evidently taken, the State will be disposed to make the necessary appropriations, and citizens of the State be ready to endow the library with their treasures as gifts.



It is worthy of notice that our library having been collected principally with the aims of a reference library, and yet naturally embracing at the same time many books of a popular character, does not possess the advantages of a library which (as in the case of the National Library of Paris and of the Boston Public Library) is divided into two or three halls, one for popular readers and one for reference. The books in the former are all suitable to be placed in the hands of all persons, while multitudes of the books in the latter may be very unsuitable for promiscuous readers. In our catalogues no marks are given of the books allowed for general reading or the contrary. It is not easy to allow of indiscriminate use by young and old, as persons frequently (often very unconsciously) ask for books the most unsuitable to be given to them, though they were on the shelves for motives appropriate to learned research.

#### RULES IN OTHER LIBRARIES.

As preliminary to an examination of the question of the amount of freedom of use that can be allowed in a State library, it will be a help to have before us the usages of some of the largest libraries of the world. The facilities for reading in the British Museum are generally commended, yet any person desiring to read there must apply in writing to the principal librarian, "specifying his description and place of abode," and accompany the letter with a written recommendation from some other person, "whose position in society, reputation or public appointment may serve as a guaranty for the respectability of the applicant. Thereupon he receives a ticket giving him the privilege for six months." Under such restrictions the reading-room is visited by over 100,000 readers in a year.\*

Admission for reading in the London Institution, an endowed library, is obtained by a reading ticket, which is to be had of any of the 900 members. Those who know no members on the list have only to furnish the librarian with a "recommendation from some professional man, merchant, employer of labor or other responsible person, and tickets will be procured them." "The library is being reorganized to give facilities for its use to the great outside body of readers."†

The scheme adopted in the National Library in Paris during the last eight years has been the provision of two reading-rooms on the same premises. One is a popular reading-room for which a special selection of about 25,000 volumes is provided, for artisans and the working classes. It has a separate entrance on another street, and any person can read there who is over 16 years of age. It received 51,000 readers in 1875. The novels, which formed a large part of the collection at first, have been gradually diminished as the room had finally become sufficiently

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\* Sim's Handbook, 1854.

† Library Journal, I, 339.



popular. The other reading-room of the great library cannot be used except by those who have received tickets of admission or certificates of some kind from the principal of a special school, or known citizens, by which they become "authorized workers." The number of registered readers here in 1875 was 51,504. This plan was the result of the labors of a commission especially appointed by the government for the purpose, of which M. Mérimée was chairman.\*

In Berlin, admission is free to all grown persons. Books are lent as of right to enumerated classes, and to other persons duly guaranteed either by certain public functionaries or other persons. "Ignorant persons frequently ask for books which promise no useful result, and thus take up the time and energy of the official attendants."†

In Dresden, all functionaries of the State have a right to admission, and also strangers presenting a written guaranty from such persons.

In a large number of the libraries on the continent, as in Lisbon, Rome, Naples, etc., admission is reported as free, though their statistics show that popular use of the library had never entered into the customs of those cities.

In the Boston Public Library, all persons who, under the law, have the right to carry books home "must have signed the application card and given satisfactory reference to one citizen."‡ Under such a restriction, about 13,000 persons register their names annually for the sake of enjoying the benefits of the library. When they apply to read in the reference library they are known by their card; and to them, and indeed to all others, the hall of the reference library is free, with such restrictions as these, that reference books marked on the catalogue with one star only circulate with the written permission of the superintendent, and those marked with three stars shall not be used either within or out of the building unless by the written permission of the president or two of the trustees. "The guaranty system is not used in the library, citizenship and identification being found sufficient." Engravings, patents and some other books are shown in separate rooms, under the supervision of special functionaries. There are other restraints to prevent injury or improper use; such as that medical works shall be loaned only to persons of that profession, and that works are not to be used as study textbooks.

The instances here cited of the usages of prominent libraries may at least have the utility of suggesting the matters for regulation in the State Library. They show from a large field of inquiry that there is a readiness to give access to the most liberal extent compatible with security. "It by no means follows that every public library indiscriminately, whatever its character or contents, should be open, without any sort of introduction or voucher of character."§ No one of these cases

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\* France: Min. de l'Ins. pub. Rapports sur la bibliothèque nationale, 1876.

† Edwards' Memoirs, II, 1007.

‡ Boston Public Library Hand-Book, 1877.

§ Edwards' Memoirs of Libraries, I, p. 1026.



can serve as an example to be hastily imitated. Each library as well as our own may have peculiarities requiring a variation of treatment.

#### REGISTRATION OF READERS.

The first rule for the consideration of the trustees would be some means for identifying the applicant for a book. It might be a rule requiring him to register his name and address in a book, or to add his address to his name on the application card containing the name of the book desired. Such a provision might be considered especially applicable to persons using the bound volumes of newspapers or any of the 3,000 volumes of patents, the 2,500 volumes of pamphlets, and books of value.

#### CARD OF INTRODUCTION FOR READERS.

In view of the measure of insufficiency of this amount of identification, instead of this first provision, the trustees might conclude in favor of a rule that readers should be introduced by letter from some reliable person, with or without guaranty or responsibility. The person introducing or guaranteeing might be a member of the legislature, a member of the clerical, medical or legal professions, or a householder in Albany. A non-resident and stranger from out of the State, by giving his address and satisfying the secretary of the trustees or the librarian of his character, might have the privilege.

It seems to be an unjustifiable disregard of the interests of a library, that books of every character, rare, unique, costly or peculiar should be delivered into the hands of a total stranger upon his simple demand in a room as public as a Broadway. In the absence of a written law to protect the library, he imagines that he has a right to require the librarian to put a work into his hands which the librarian thinks is for some reason obviously unfit. Either the identity or the character or the responsibility of every individual should be certified to in some manner, that at least the library may be able to trace an injury to the offender. Any gentleman informed of the circumstances would see the propriety of making himself known through an introduction from another person or by his card. Any person considering himself wronged would always have the privilege of appealing to the judgment of the secretary or of the library committee.

#### MUTILATION AND THEFT OF BOOKS.

Further special legislation may be necessary to protect this library, and other libraries in this State, from the mutilation or theft of books. At present our regulations contain no prohibitions or penalties to deter wrong-doers in these particulars, but make the librarians responsible for all mutilations and losses, "unless it can be shown that some other person is responsible for such loss or injury." The usual method in libraries is to make the reader or borrower responsible, and to request him to



point out all observed defects. The library has suffered to some extent from both these causes, and in proportion to the increase of use of the library is liable to suffer more in the future than in the past. The number employed in the service of the library is not sufficient to allow of any adequate supervision of readers.

By the laws of Massachusetts any person found guilty of writing upon or otherwise defacing any book belonging to a public library is punishable by a fine not exceeding \$1,000 for each offense. By a law of this State passed in 1872, any member or other person mutilating or injuring a book belonging to an incorporate library is liable to a fine of \$100, "provided that no prosecution shall be maintained under the act, unless the library prosecuting shall have had at least two printed copies of the act conspicuously exposed on the premises." In the Astor Library, within a short period, a person was discovered who had cut out many pages from several volumes, but they were unable to prosecute him under that act because they had not advertised the law in the building.

It is the belief of librarians generally that the advertisement of penalties for offenses of this kind does much more good than it can possibly do harm. In some libraries of England the record of convictions under a somewhat similar law against injuries has been posted in the library with the names of the offenders, and with very good effect. In the British Museum, where it was thought the good had been sufficiently accomplished, the placard was taken down. The same offenses again speedily multiplied and the placards were restored to their old place. It appears that in a glass case near the entrance an exhibition is made of the mutilated books themselves, so that what is carried off becomes of no use to its possessor.\* In Amherst College, Mass., books are furnished with a colored book-mark on which is printed the State law against mutilation, and the college offers \$25 reward for evidence leading to the conviction of any person so offending. In a town in Massachusetts a plate had been taken out of a book in the library by a reader, and a reward was offered for the discovery of the offender in the local newspaper, and the engraving was sent back by mail. A similar result followed the announcement this year from the office of the Secretary of State that certain manuscripts had been taken from his office; many of the manuscripts stolen were returned.

It is the testimony of many librarians that the grounds for distrust touch more closely the educated than the ignorant. This is a topic calling for instructions from the trustees.

#### RESTRICTIONS ON READERS.

In a previous part of this paper, in speaking of the aim of the library, we gave the titles of various works as illustrations of thousands in the library on which restrictions should be placed upon their use if it were

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\* Athenæum, London, Oct. 20, 1877.



a reference library, or they should be duplicated if it were a popular library. But there are in the library besides hundreds of volumes of fiction, provided as literary history of American authors, or for the use of families of members and of the State officers. If all classes of readers without distinction and without cards of introduction continue to have the privilege of occupying seats at the tables, a rule might be adopted that light literature should not be delivered for continuous reading in the library. The reason for the rule would be that the delivery of them took up too much of the time of the librarians. In Dresden, light literature is not loaned out of the library or given to be read in the library, and for no other reason than this, as the books can be obtained elsewhere by the applicants. Of course, if the trustees and the legislature enter upon the project of making the library a "popular" one, and provide a corresponding staff, the reason for the rule falls to the ground. The discrimination would not be against light literature or novels, but to prevent the library's becoming a heavy expense to the State in proportion to its utility. Our own copies of works of fiction are frequently worn out and have to be condemned as worthless.

Restrictions hitherto made in regard to the character of the books to be delivered to readers, when made by the librarians in certain circumstances, have been approved by the library committee and the trustees. In February, 1876, when some complained that they had been refused books on account of their trifling character, the joint library committee of the legislature sustained, in their report, the course which had been pursued.

For popular libraries it is a very generally accepted principle that there should be no limit to the age of the readers. The library is an educational institution, and any child that can read in quiet may be allowed to read in the public room.\* In the rules hitherto printed by the trustees no mention is made of the young, its use by them having been so limited, it was not necessary. If the library is not to be treated as a popular library, discrimination on the score of age would be proper, unless in the case of youth especially recommended. In that case a preamble to all the rules might contain the declaration that the library was not a popular library, and that the time of the librarians must be economized, and could not be occupied in furnishing light literature for general reading.

It would be extremely difficult to provide that the rules, regarding discrimination of readers and reading, should require more restrictions in the six months of winter, including the whole session of the legislature, and be relaxed for the summer months or the other six months of the year.

Perhaps the application of some other rules suggested will serve instead of any discrimination in the character of the books to be delivered, and prevent the use of the library merely for amusement. The Massachusetts State library being spécial in the character of its purchases, has no popular

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\* U. S. Libraries' Report, p. 413.



books, and consequently has no readers seeking for them. The fundamental article upon which the library is based is: "The State Library is for the use of the Governor, Lieutenant-Governor, the council, the senate, the house of representatives and such other officers of the government and other persons as may from time to time be permitted to use the same." The privileges of the people in a public town library are common and equal, if they are tax-payers of that town; but in a State library their privileges extend only just so far as the government has allowed them. They have the same rights in it that they have to the use of any of the other public institutions of the State.

#### BOOKS IMPROPER FOR GENERAL CIRCULATION.

On this topic it will be sufficient for the present to quote the instructions given by the trustees to the librarians, March 8, 1858, and which are not found in any printed copy of the rules:

"There is a class of books in the library which have been deposited there as illustrative of the age in which they were written and to preserve its history. They are not designed for ordinary and common reading, and the trustees would be justly censurable if they had placed them there for such purpose. The frequency with which such books have lately been called for, and the avidity with which they are read by young men, make it imperative on the trustees to direct that they shall in no case be delivered without the written order of the secretary. You will exercise great discretion in regard to all books which may be called for, which in your judgment may exercise a demoralizing influence over the young. You will also refuse the use of illustrated works to persons in whose hands you believe they will sustain injury.

"By order of the trustees."

In accordance with this principle, it has long been the custom to give as a reason for not delivering to young persons some of the books applied for, that the library did not give out, without especial orders, books which on account of their character would not be allowed a place in a district school library.

#### ORDERS FOR BORROWING BOOKS.

When a person, who by law has a right to borrow books from the library, gives to another person the privilege of drawing books in his name, he thereby deprives himself of his own right for the time. The order is so frequently originally granted to the applicant by the person applied to, under the impression that such orders are the usual and legitimate way for all persons to have the full use of the library, that when he comes to ask for a book for his own use, he is disappointed to find that he has legally exhausted all his own right; in consequence it has been usual to allow such person to draw for his own use the works he would otherwise be entitled to. The letter of the law does not, how-



ever, provide for any such use of orders and their acceptance by the librarian. The librarian of the Pennsylvania State Library has reported to the legislature, regarding an order system, which had been in use with them, and he speaks of it most extravagantly, as one "which of itself would deplete any library in this or any other community." The use of such orders has been prohibited in that State and in Tennessee, Ohio, and Vermont, in consequence of the losses their libraries had suffered. It should, however, be possible to control the matter and protect the library even with the use of orders. The whole system is one, the extension or restriction of which depends upon the degree to which the legislature and the trustees aim to have the library conducted, on the basis of a popular town library, or as a reference library of the government. Every extension of the system of loaning on orders demands more means of watchfulness and greater expense of management.

Several questions arise here for decision. If a person entitled to draw books give an order for another person to draw in his name, does he continue to have the privilege of drawing himself? This would double the privilege of drawing books beyond the provisions of law. Can any person be privileged to give an order to more than one person? If the order is given by a member of the legislature for himself or for another person, can it extend beyond the actual session of the legislature? Should an order in behalf of a person to draw in the name of another person be unlimited as to time? In the British Museum, those who have tickets for reading in the library merely enjoy the privilege for a limited number of months.

#### LOANING BOOKS OUT OF ALBANY.

There is no provision in the rules for loaning books to persons out of the city, nor for sending them out of the city to those State officers who have a right to draw books themselves. In Germany the custom exists in the principal libraries of loaning books to individuals in distant towns on the security of the library to which they are consigned. Libraries in 14 different places, including Berlin, Munich and Vienna exchange in this manner with Dresden.

In the colony of Victoria, in 1875, 4,700 volumes were loaned by the trustees of the library in Melbourne to libraries and mechanics' institutes in distant towns; they were furnished at the expense of the government to be reloaned to individuals. After a box or boxes arranged with shelves inside has done service for a few months, it is returned to be sent out again to another town. This is an effort in a new settled country to perform the work of the popular library by the government. A librarian at the Librarians' Conference in London, Oct., 1877, urged the duty of existing libraries in England loaning books to persons in distant towns. One method suggested was that duplicate works might be set aside for a national or State lending library of the

same kind. The request for such accommodation is sometimes made to the library committee and to the secretary. Every such extension implies additional expense to the State, and if the measure should be adopted, it should be with provision for ample protection from loss and damage.

#### COPYING OF MANUSCRIPTS.

Any person desiring to copy the whole of any manuscript in the library should obtain, when required by the librarian, the permission of the secretary of the trustees or of the library committee, to whom it should be his duty to refer the applicant in any case of doubt.

#### LAW LIBRARY RULES.

Restrictions founded on these principles have long been applied in the law library. In April, 1861, the judiciary committee of the senate and assembly were required to report its condition and "upon the necessity of legislative action to preserve the same from destruction." In their report they show that the library was for the "use of the government and the people of the State," and manifestly to be used for the purposes of reference. But they regretted to find that "its use as thus restricted has been so extended as to be made a place of study to an almost unlimited extent, to the great inconvenience of the judges of the courts and the bar." Upon this report the legislature resolved that the law library having been established for the use of the officers of the government, the courts and the bar, "it is the duty of the trustees of the said library to secure its uninterrupted use to such purposes, and that to secure that end the said trustees should limit its use to such persons and officers, especially during the sessions of the legislature and the terms of the courts." In consequence, students in law during the terms of the courts are not admitted to the use of the library until 2 P.M.

#### CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS ON THE RULES.

Many points regarding these and other rules must be left for consideration to the time when the whole body of the regulations shall have been drawn up in harmony with a general plan.

Of course, just so far as the ends for which the general library is established are defined, effective rules may be applied for its management. Whatever the restrictions might be, they would still leave Albany in the enjoyment of great advantages over other cities, and the library would make one of its attractions; solely, its citizens of all ages would not, from the accident of being so, have so great privileges as if it were a free town library and established by their own municipality.

In a library protected in the character of its readers, it would be possible to have thousands of volumes exposed without locks, for use for reference, without previous application to the librarian, in the same manner as 20,000 volumes are exposed in the reading-room of the British Museum.



### ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE NEEDED IN THE LIBRARY.

Having in the course of this statement given a summary account of the work to be done in the library, I deem it my duty and privilege respectfully to express the opinion that additional assistance should be employed in it. The opinion has repeatedly been expressed by the chairman of the library committee that it should be under the care of a librarian and two assistants; yet the paper submitted by me to the committee in April, 1876, showed that the amount of service devoted to the library has been diminished instead of being increased since 1855. It has been diminished more than one-fifth; while within that time the library has increased from 40,000 to more than 103,000 volumes; and 50,000 pamphlets have been added with the immense series of volumes of patents. There is a double handling of the books owing to the crowded state of the shelves whereon they stand in double rows. The population of the city has nearly doubled within that time. Other causes of additional labor have been previously mentioned. Of course the cares and duties of the librarians have correspondingly increased.

If the trustees should deliberately bestow attention upon this subject, they would be convinced that there is too much work to be done in a growing and much-used library, that it can be done well by a single librarian and assistant. The chairman of the library committee, in a report to the trustees in 1856, remarks: "The care of a large library such as that of the State is now becoming, and the judgment and attention needed in the selection and purchase of books for its enlargement, with the details of its management, require an amount of time and attention which most persons do not at all appreciate." \* The continual and increased demand for those services, which are more appropriate to a popular library, is so great that much is necessarily not done which should be attended to; although the work neglected, while useful and necessary, is not obvious, and needs to be pointed out to an examiner. It is impossible for the librarians in these circumstances to make the library suitably useful to the public. It is impossible that the printed catalogues and indexes should have that bibliographical detail, completeness and exactness which the age demands, which are now exhibited in the best American catalogues, and which the position of the State gives men a right to expect. The Boston Athenæum is spending \$100,000 in preparing and printing its catalogue of a library of 105,000 volumes. "Harvard College has employed 18 persons for 16 years, and only half the library has been catalogued." † It is impossible to protect the library from thefts and mutilations when a single librarian and assistant are compelled both to exercise surveillance, prepare catalogues, deliver books, and receive visitors all within the same hours.

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\* Minutes of the Regents for 1852-59, p. 253.

† Amer. Lib. Journal, I, p. 115.



The work actually performed stands out in one respect bodily, in more than 3,000 pages of catalogues for the general library, besides the lists of additions in the annual reports of the trustees. The history of all the libraries in the country will not include a single one where so much and so large a variety of library work has been performed by two persons as during the same space of time has been performed in the general department of the New York State Library, though persons passing before the alcoves where the books repose in quiet order on the shelves might be tempted to say, "What an easy berth for a librarian!"

Whatever decision may be adopted regarding the popular aims of the library, the increase of assistance will still be necessary; and certainly not as little will suffice as was asked for in my letter addressed to the trustees at their annual meeting of January, 1877, in which, after repeating this fact of increase of work and diminished assistance, which had been contained in my statement of April, 1876, I requested an additional assistant at least during six months of the year, the period within which the legislature is in session and the pressure is the greatest. This small amount was requested, not as being deemed sufficient, but as a partial relief from the pressure, believing that the library committee would not deem it wise to ask the legislature for more.

#### THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE LIBRARY.

In connection with this subject, another presents itself of considerable importance, though of much delicacy. The wants of the library require for greater efficiency that some one should be most closely related to it as its chief executive officer, whether called secretary, librarian, keeper, superintendent or any other name, who, under prescribed limitations, should have the power to act for the library. This is not the present condition of things. The present most respected and laborious secretary of the Board of Regents is also, since 1856, the secretary of the library. In his position he has all the correspondence and consultations on education, the State Museum, the Normal School and other assigned charges, and, occupied with his increasing duties, which grow with the growth of the State, he is not able to give much of his time to the library. Some person competent to act as librarian should have the power to act for the library. A man of education and culture acting as librarian, with an experience of several years ought to be qualified to suggest the books which it would be most desirable to purchase and to place on the shelves of the library. Receiving from the trustees from month to month general principles to guide him in his selections, he should make to them monthly report of his purchases, and thereupon receive fresh special instructions. With this mode of coöperation he could not fail to make satisfactory acquisitions from the various sources of supply. These remarks do not apply to purchases involving a large sum.



On this topic Mr. J. Winter Jones, the librarian of the British Museum, said at the late London Conference of Librarians, October, 1877, in language briefly summarized by a reporter: "Books ought to be selected by a good librarian, not by a committee."\* In his capacity as librarian he has the disposal on his sole responsibility of one-fifth of the \$100,000 annually appropriated for the library. Mr. Harrison, librarian of the London Library, at the same conference "claimed for a librarian as much liberty of action as possible in book purchases, seeing that he had many chance opportunities of buying that must be seized with promptitude, and would not wait for the periodical meeting of the library committee."\* The author of the paper "How to make Town Libraries Successful," in the United States Libraries' Report, 1876, says: "If the librarian is competent, he should be the trusted executive of the board, and behind him should stand a board of trustees or directors, or other consulting or legislative body ..... Such executive should be allowed under full responsibility adequate powers."†

It should not be necessary in classes of books like our town and county histories, the purchase of which has been declared desirable and proper by the reports and usages of nearly 50 years, that there should be frequent delays and loss of time, and sometimes losses of books, while waiting for a chance to get the approbation of the library committee. After 23 years' experience in the general library, its librarian has no authority to buy a single volume; it is brought to the office of the secretary for approval, who rarely takes the responsibility, and there it waits for the approval of the library committee.

There is less occasion for a feeling of embarrassment in adverting to this topic than there would be if sentiments in many respects similar had not already been expressed by the trustees. In 1856, after the death of Dr. Beck, the secretary of the library, and after the appointment of his successor, the trustees, in their annual report to the legislature, make mention that "the interests of the library and its enlargement were the subject of his constant thought and unremitting energies." They then add that "the duties of the secretary of the Regents have become so numerous and important that the Regents have resolved to appoint an additional secretary, whose chief duty they propose it shall be to take charge of the library.....and they respectfully request the legislature to make such provision for his compensation as they may deem proper." This plan was never executed. Instead of it, the educational department, having also increased in importance and labors, received an assistant secretary; while nearly all those library duties which had been discharged with so much enthusiasm by Dr. Beck, and which occupied so great a part of his time, have fallen to the lot and care of the librarian of the general library.

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\* Athenæum, London, Oct. 6, 1877.

† p. 430.



## THE LIBRARY HALL OF THE NEW CAPITOL.

There is another and final topic of so great importance that I hope to be excused for introducing it to the notice of the trustees in this statement. It is the question of the uses and disposition to be made of that large portion of the new capitol which has been devoted to the general library only.

The occasion which led to the preparation of these remarks was the prospect of the removal of the library to its new home, an event of importance to the interests of the library and to the people of the State. There is always danger in such an edifice that those interests may be sacrificed to the fancied necessities of architecture, or that its construction will have been so far advanced that it may be too late to introduce or apply an adequate remedy. It is natural to feel a solicitude that the arrangements, in a structure of such permanent character, should be the best known for the security and preservation of the books, and for facilitating their use by readers. The latest conclusions on this subject of men of the largest experience in library administration cannot fail to be of utility at this juncture, and, therefore, I propose to quote the expressed opinions of several of them.

In this age of multiplication of libraries, and the still greater multiplication of books to be stored in them, edifices for the purpose are being constructed on new principles, better adapted to the aims of libraries, and to the ever-growing number of books, than have been any of the previous structures.

But with regard to the plan of our own proposed library hall, the only information before the public accessible to me is from an architect, and it states, that it will "occupy the whole of the east front of two stories, and will be 283 feet long, and 54 feet wide and 48 feet high. This will be the most attractive room in the building, and it is believed in the world. Its large area and lofty proportions, its views toward the north, east and south.....will make it a favorite place of resort at all seasons of the year." There is another description which gives visitors a promenade over the lofty portico of the building outside of the hall. The above description, however, shadowing forth that it is to be a lounge attractive to wandering visitors, does not make an equally attractive picture for students of history and science. And, moreover, it will appear to those who have made the subject a special study, to indicate a choice of the most costly mode of shelving books, and the most costly and inconvenient mode of accommodating students.

## STORING BOOKS COMPACTLY

The aims of librarians of the present day are to be able to store the largest number of books in the least possible space consistent with freedom of access to them by librarians, and with abundance of light, and to



provide adjoining to it a convenient reading-room or reading-rooms, independent of and additional to the rooms where the books are stored. Three modern edifices, the new hall of the National Library of Paris, the new portions of the British Museum Library surrounding its reading-room, and the new addition to the old library of Harvard College, are all constructed upon the principle to which I have referred. The alcoves of the British Museum which radiate from the circle of its modern reading-room, constructed in the quadrangle of the old edifice, have a length of shelving of 25 miles, and have a capacity for 1,500,000 volumes.

The new wing (62 by 34 feet) to Gore Hall, the old library at Harvard College, is designed to accommodate 200,000 additional volumes. When built, in 1840, it was thought that the edifice was large enough for all the books that would be placed in it for a century. It is built with a roof largely of glass, and abundant and large glass windows on the sides. Whatever the apparent number of stories outside, it has five stories inside, each story not being more than seven feet high. The floors of each story are of iron open work. Through the whole length of each story extend as many double-faced tiers of shelving as can find room, after providing an allowance of two and a-half feet between the several tiers. The runners for books reach the shelves by numerous narrow stairs conveniently placed. Around the whole runs a passageway three feet in width, so that no books come against the outside walls.

Mr. Winsor, late of the Boston Public Library, and Mr. Poole, of the Chicago Public Library, both gentlemen of the largest experience in modern library wants, at the Librarians' Convention in New York, in September, 1877, each of them presented diagrams of their own plans for arranging books, which harmonize essentially in the principle of compactness of storage with those of the three libraries to which I have referred. The large hall of the Boston Library, one of the comparatively recent structures for a library, was frequently referred to, by those best acquainted with it, as a failure in many respects; being the source of great embarrassments, most of them irremediable, on account of defective arrangement in the fundamental plan.

#### REASONS FOR COMPACT STORAGE.

Among the reasons for resorting to the principle of compactly storing books is the prodigious rapidity with which libraries increase, frequently doubling their number of volumes repeatedly in a few years. The library in Paris is said to-day to actually contain over 2,000,000 volumes, and perhaps it is not an exaggeration. The librarian of Congress, with the new capitol barely finished in its present enlargement, asks for a separate edifice for the National Library, and one that can be easily enlarged to receive 2,000,000 volumes. It has twice doubled in 13 years from 1861. The short period of 25 years has already, without extra appropriations, rendered the hall of the New York State Library too small by one-half



to accommodate properly the books now stored within it. If the ratio of increase should be only slightly greater than in the past 25 years, 50 years would not elapse before it would be necessary to provide accommodations for it elsewhere than in the new capitol. It is doubtful whether sufficient light can be secured in it to apply thoroughly the principle of storage.

Another reason is that there is a great economy of time secured by bringing the books near to the librarians and the messengers; the economy of time is also equally to the advantage of the reader. This principle led to the construction of the new library building of the college of New Jersey as an octagon, having the librarians' desk at the centre, and from it rays of tiers of shelving diverge to the walls. Notwithstanding its outside dimensions are only 64 feet, and it is but two stories high, there is abundant accommodation for 100,000 volumes in that small space.\* The difficulties of the service of readers by the librarians in a hall constructed and arranged like the present hall of the general library are very great. "A library hall, for example, should not be arranged with such absolute disregard of economy that the attendants will have to travel four miles to get books, for every one mile they would have gone in a well-devised structure."†

#### SEPARATE READING-ROOMS.

One portion of the library hall should be set off and inclosed as a reading-room. It is the opinion of all librarians that reference libraries should have reading-rooms for their readers separate from the room where the books are stored. Edwards, in his *Memoirs of Libraries*, says: "The reading-rooms should invariably be distinct from the rooms appropriated to the main collection of books." "If the library be a large one, two reading-rooms at least should be provided." "An ample provision of small working-rooms will be found to be true economy."‡

The Boston Public Library provides a reference reading-room in its reading-room for periodicals, and a room for the delivery of books loaned out, in addition to the reading tables of the reference library room on the story above. The patents are exhibited in a separate room, and the engravings in an additional one. Mr. Poole says: "The reading-room should be a separate apartment from the library room."§

In the new part of Harvard library is contained an ante-room for the delivery of books, with coat-rooms, besides three working-rooms for the librarian and assistants, and the book-room. The general library of the New York State Library has not even a coat closet, or any room but the one book-room. The law library has had three of its alcoves separated from it for secretary's, assistant secretary's, and bindery rooms since the hall has been occupied for the library.

\* *Lib. Journal*, Nov. 1873.

† Cutter, C. A., *Lib. Jour.*, p. 390.

‡ London, 1859, vol. II, pp. 731, 1036, 1037, 1066.

§ United States Libraries' Report, 1876, pp. 484, 485.



### DIFFICULTY OF HEATING A LARGE LIBRARY.

It constitutes a strong reason for a separate reading-room that a hall 300 feet long and 48 feet high is difficult to heat in our climate, so as to be comfortable for readers, without too much expense ; or, it may not be possible to heat it sufficiently, and thus leaves them uncomfortable. The hall of the present State Library has never been suitably warmed with three and four furnaces in the cellar and two heaters in the upper hall. If made sufficiently warm for readers, it then becomes injurious to the books by the excess of dryness resulting from the protracted and excessive heat. The amount of heat necessary to warm a lofty hall causes the upper stories of the galleries to be extremely hot, and this heat proves to be more detrimental to the binding than even the gas. On one occasion the heat was found to be more than 145 degrees of Fahrenheit. The heat in a hall designed merely for books and not for readers would be but moderate, yet always sufficiently warm for the runners after the books.

As a consequence of such a change of plan as here suggested in the uses of the parts of a library, the reading-room becomes the home of architectural ornament rather than the room where the books are stored.

In case the hall for books should be finished with great architectural elegance, and the storage plan not adopted, there would still be a propriety that readers should have a separate room, and not be interrupted by the crowd of mere visitors passing through it to view paintings and objects of curiosity or to reach the balcony outside.

The aim should be to adapt the space as effectively as possible to the purposes for which it is wanted—to hold books and to read in without interruption and in quiet. How much of an object is it to be able to say that one has the most magnificent library hall in the country, if as a consequence the hall is rendered most inconvenient and ill adapted to its proper use, and if it is no part of the aim of a library to secure such a hall, and if instead of being an advantage it is an obstacle in the way of its usefulness ?

As to how far any of the facts adduced on this last topic, and the thoughts or desires which they may suggest, can be practically applied, I do not need to express at present any opinion ; but I had such convictions of the importance of the facts that I could not refrain from embodying them on paper and laying them before the trustees.

If, for the solution of this and of other topics embraced in this report, the trustees should see sufficient motive to appoint a special committee or committees, many additional facts and opinions of others could be brought forward which would throw a fuller light upon the questions discussed, and which I have only refrained from reciting so as not to prolong this report. Having received a trust from the State, the care and welfare of the State Library, I felt confident they would welcome

any information respectfully communicated with good intentions which might facilitate them in the discharge of it.

In conclusion, I solicit from the trustees the most indulgent interpretation they can possibly give to every line of this report. I hope that they will not be able to see in any part of it aught else than the sincerest interest in the welfare of an institution for which the writer has worked most heartily for more than a score of years. He recognizes in himself no other desire than that such decisions may be reached by the trustees from the discussions of the themes herein introduced to their notice as may conduce effectively to the greatest public good.

All of which is very respectfully submitted.

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*Librarian of the General Library.*

STATE LIBRARY, ALBANY, *January 1, 1878.*